

Thinking of

RABBITS

as pets?



**READ OUR TOP TIPS ON
RABBIT CARE AND ALL YOU
NEED TO CONSIDER FIRST**

If you're a new rabbit owner or are thinking of getting a rabbit as a pet, you've come to the right place!
Read on for our top tips!



Contents

Page 3	Company
Page 4	Housing
Page 5	Garden free-ranging
Page 6	Indoor free-ranging
Page 7	Rabbits need to be rabbits!
Page 8	Diet
Page 9	Grooming
Page 10	Health
Page 11	Enrichment
Page 12	Cost and commitment
Page 13	Rabbits and children
Page 14	Vaccination
Page 15	Why adopt

Tip 1

Rabbits need friends

Rabbits are highly social animals and need other rabbits as friends.

They will become very depressed if kept alone, so you should always have at least two suitably paired rabbits to keep each other company.



If you have a lonely rabbit at home, we offer a bonding service to help them to find a friend. Ask us for more information!

Tip 2

Rabbits need lots of space

- a hutch is not enough!

Rabbits need spacious living accommodation and access to a large running area.

The recommended *minimum* living area for 2 rabbits is an enclosed area of at least 3m x 2m by 1m high - but bigger is always better!

The same footprint is recommended for indoor rabbits.



Many people don't use hutches at all any more, but will house their rabbits in a specially built enclosure or converted and insulated shed or wendy house.

For inspiration and some really good examples of suitable rabbit housing see

www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk

Your rabbits' accommodation should include a sheltered area (often referred as their house) and this should be attached to a predator-safe run that is at least 2m x 2m or an enclosed garden so your rabbits can choose to go in or out as they please during daylight hours.

Garden free-ranging bunnies

If you have a safe and secure garden it may be possible to give your rabbits constant access to free-range in the garden.



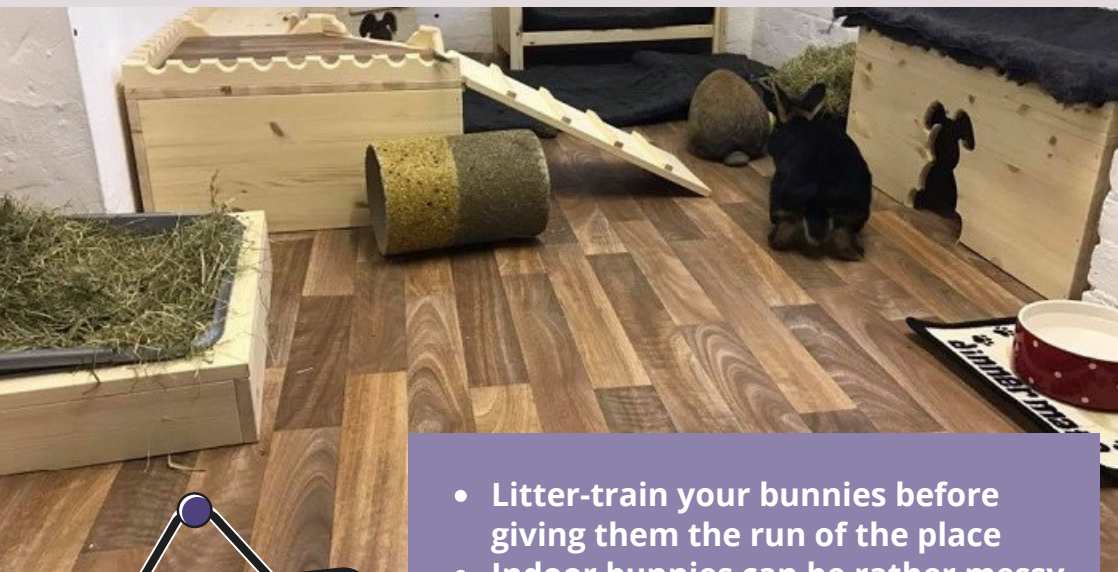
Top tips

- Make sure your garden is free from any poisonous plants or weeds
- Make sure your garden is escape-proof (remember rabbits can dig under fences)
- Provide lots of secure hiding places. Rabbits are prey animals and need constant access to safe hiding places if they are feeling afraid
- If there are many foxes or cats in your area it may be best to avoid having free-roaming rabbits, unless they are supervised at all times.

Indoor free-ranging bunnies

Rabbits are becoming very popular house pets, and it's possible to have them loose indoors as long as you bunny-proof the room(s) they're allowed in. The room(s) should be clear of: wires, house plants, slippery floors (cover with mats/rugs) and other hazards.

Provide an area with all the supplies your rabbits need, such as hay, Readigrass, water, fresh grass and enrichment items. Indoor rabbits should also have access to a garden or secure outside run.



- Litter-train your bunnies before giving them the run of the place
- Indoor bunnies can be rather messy - be prepared for extra cleaning!
- Ensure your rabbits are safe when you go out - think about any harm that could come to them and remedy it before leaving, e.g. closing doors, clearing unnecessary wires or objects.

Tip 3

Rabbits need to be rabbits!



Rabbits need the freedom to be well, rabbits! They need to be able to display natural behaviours like running, digging, jumping, grazing, foraging, hiding and binkyng (binkyng is when a rabbit leaps in the air for joy!)

For this they need access to an enclosed garden or big run with plenty of enrichment in their environment, so they can let rip and behave as they would in the wild.



Tip 4

Rabbits need the right diet

85%
Grass and Hay

10%
Greens plants
& herbs

5%
Pellets



Rabbit Welfare
Association & Fund
a charity is not enough

Rabbits have a very complex digestive system, and it is important that this is kept in tip top condition.

Rabbits' diet should consist of 85% good quality feeding hay and grass (not lawn clippings), 10% green leafy veg and 5% good quality nuggets, as well as constant access to fresh water.

An incorrect diet (such as feeding rabbit muesli) can lead to serious and potentially fatal health problems like gut stasis and dental problems.

Treats should only be given sparingly, up to a couple of times a week. These can be small amounts of fresh fruit and vegetables, such as apples and carrots.

Take care to research the toxicity of any treats or foraged greens first.



Tip 5

Rabbits need to be kept clean

Rabbits' homes need frequent cleaning out, and rabbit bums need to be checked every day to make sure they are clean.

Failure to do this can lead to flystrike, where a fly lays its eggs on impacted faeces, and once hatched the maggots start to eat into the rabbit's flesh.

Flystrike is a potentially fatal condition, and if you see a maggot on your rabbit you should take them to the vet straight away.



Tip 6

Rabbits need frequent grooming



Rabbits – especially long-haired varieties, need to be groomed frequently to avoid matting of the fur. Mats can cause some really serious problems for your rabbits, but thankfully a regular groom can prevent them from happening.

Tip 7

Find a rabbit-savvy vet

While most vets are highly skilled at treating common pets like cats and dogs, not all vets are experts with smaller animals such as rabbits.

It's therefore necessary to find a rabbit-savvy vet to ensure you always get the correct treatment for your rabbits.

Look for vets who are on the Rabbit Welfare Association Rabbit-Friendly Vet List at www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk

Before getting your rabbits, consider whether you will be able to afford all the future vet bills they may need.



Check out [our handy video guide](https://bit.ly/rabbithealthcheck) to giving your rabbit a basic health-check at <https://bit.ly/rabbithealthcheck>





Tip 8

Rabbits need enrichment

In the wild, rabbits would spend their time digging, running, jumping, rearing up, hiding, eating and socialising with other rabbits. To allow your pet rabbits to exhibit their natural behaviours you need to give them plenty to do. This is called enrichment.



This can include tunnels and hides, platforms, toys and opportunities to forage and dig. Enrichment items can be bought from pet shops or can be as cheap and easy as a cardboard box with a hole cut at each end. See www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk for some great ideas and check out our video below.



Check out our handy video guide at <https://bit.ly/rabbitenrich> to making some fun and easy enrichment toys, using things you have at home.

Tip 9

Rabbits are a 10 year commitment

Rabbits can live, on average, for 8-12 years so when you take them on its important to consider whether you will be able to commit to them for their whole lives.

Children can often lose interest in pets, so it's also important for parents to be willing to undertake the commitment of the rabbits' care in that case.



Tip 10

A rabbit can cost £11,000 in its lifetime



Yes, you did read that right! After the initial outlay for your rabbits housing and predator-proof run, there are ongoing costs for hay and food and veterinary visits which can be very costly and can add up over the years to a whopping £11,000.

It's important to make sure you have not only the time to commit to your rabbits' needs but also the financial resources to be able to care for them properly.

Tip 11

Rabbits are not easy pets for children

Did you know? Rabbits aren't big fans of being picked up and cuddled. Being prey animals, most rabbits don't like being raised up in the air where they feel vulnerable. There are exceptions to this of course, but most rabbits prefer to be stroked while they are on the ground.

Having sharp teeth and claws and powerful back legs, rabbits can give a swift kick or a bite and can injure children if they are not handled correctly.



Children will often rapidly lose interest when they realise that rabbits are not going to be the cuddly pets they expected.



This is the main reason that

67,000

**rabbits go into
rescues every year in
the UK.**

Tip 12

Rabbits need to be vaccinated



There are three highly contagious and fatal diseases prevalent in the rabbit population – Myxomatosis, RVHD (Rabbit Viral Haemorrhagic Disease)-1 and RVHD-2.

Thankfully all of these diseases can be prevented by vaccination, and it's important to make sure that your rabbits' vaccinations are up to date each year.

Tip 13

More research needed!

As with any new species you are considering bringing into your family, if you are considering getting rabbits as pets, it's vitally important to research them very thoroughly first. 67,000 rabbits every year go into rescues in the UK, because people did not realise what they were taking on when they bought them.

A graphic illustration of a wooden signpost with the text 'Do your research'. The signpost is decorated with yellow and pink flowers. A small white rabbit is standing at the base of the signpost, surrounded by green foliage and purple flowers.

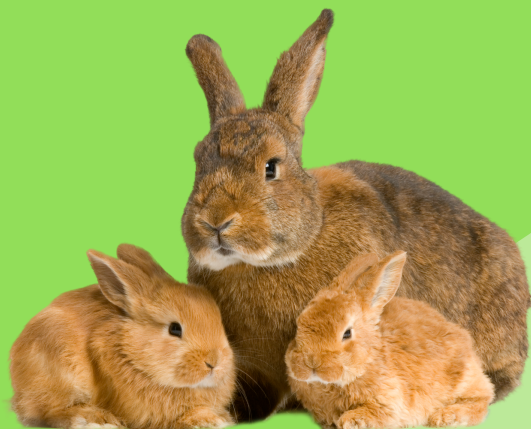
**Do your
research**

Find out more at www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk

Tip 14

Adopt, don't shop

If, after researching rabbits fully, you are prepared to make the commitment to giving them their forever home, please do consider adopting rabbits rather than shopping.



You've heard about puppy mills, but did you know that rabbits in pet stores are also often mass-bred for profit with little or no regard for health or the genetic makeup of the lines? They can often suffer from many health issues during their lifetime as a result.

There are thousands of rabbits sitting in rescues all over the UK, all waiting and hoping to find new homes and a second chance at a happy life. We have many lovely rabbits at our rescue centre all hoping to find loving new homes and would be happy to help you find the right rabbit or rabbits for you.

We also offer a bonding service if you are looking for a new friend for your lonely bunny at home.

Call us on 01803 812121 or see www.animalsindistress.uk.com for more info.





Thank you for reading!



Animals in Distress

Biltor, Edgelands Lane, Ipplepen

Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 5UF

Tel 01803 812121

Email info@animalsindistress.uk.com

www.animalsindistress.uk.com

Registered Charity No. 1105487